

My name is Ariel Aylesworth. I am the youth director of BACC, representing the youth of the Bethesda African Cemetery Coalition (house bill 1099). Despite growing up in Maryland it has not been until recently that I have become aware of the strong and rich history of the African American community hidden in Montgomery County and around the state of Maryland. As a young black woman, it pains me to see how easy it has been for large companies to erase the history of hundreds of black men and women. It pains me to see the African American community, the same community which built the state we know today, pushed and tricked out of the land they rightfully own. But most of all, it pains me to see how willing the government has been to let such injustice stand. It angers me to see that River Road, which was once vibrant with the lives of African Americans, has lost almost all traces of the vibrant community that once thrived there; only Macedonia Baptist church and Moses Cemetery remain. Saving Moses cemetery is important to me because I refuse to let my ancestors be forgotten. I want future generations to be able to return to Moses Cemetery and honor the slaves and Activists who came before them, fighting and dying to make America what it is today. They embody what it has meant to be black in America for hundreds of years. Even in 2021 we are fighting this fight, and it must not be forgotten. So please legislators I urge you to support house bill 1099 with the following amendments. Do not let us forget those who fought to bring us to where we are today.